The Retrograde

Monday, August 24, 2026

UTD's official, independently-run student newspaper.

retrogradenews.com

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FLOCK ON CAMPUS

UTD PD's use of APLR cameras, their reasoning and its impacts

TYLER CRIVELLA
Editor-in-Chief

UTD PD currently operates 13 Flock Automatic License Plate Readers, solar-powered cameras that record — at all road entrances to the university — any vehicle on campus.

Instead of being owned by the university, the cameras are owned by Flock Technologies, a private company. To use the ALPRs on campus, UTD PD must pay annual fees and allow external law enforcement agencies to access UTD's cameras indirectly.

On Aug. 13, the ACLU called the system a "major civil liberties threat" because they store massive amounts of warrantless data on every vehicle that passes through their network of over 120,000 ALPRs countrywide. On Aug. 20, Dallas Morning News' Editorial Board supported ALPRs and claimed they prevent crime and protect citizens.

How is UTD using the technology?

According to an internal document obtained by *The Retrograde*, UTD PD has listed 13 entrance-based locations for the cameras, with four additional locations potentially considered for the roads surrounding the Waterview Science and Technology Center and Research and Operations Center.

According to UTD PD's transparency portal, data is only retained for 30 days. Camera data is shared with 528 different organizations, including some out-of-state agencies, like the West Des Moines PD in Iowa and Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office in California.

UTD PD's camera network scans approximately 1,700 vehicles a day. While the university says it does not collect demographic information, like race or gender, it does gather license plates, vehicle color and unique features such as bumper stickers.

In the last 30 days UTD PD reported that it scanned 52,594 unique vehicles.

If a vehicle is found to match certain lists, like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Amber Alert database, UTD PD is alerted immediately, with text messages sent to command staff and computer notifications sent to patrolling officers, according to an internal document.

Because UTD does not outright own the technology, they must annually pay Flock $2,500 per camera with an additional $250 installation fee. Across its 13 currently operational APLRs, the network costs UTD PD $32,500 a year.

As of publication, UTD PD has not responded to repeated requests for comment.

How might this affect students at UTD?

If you have driven a vehicle into UTD, you are in Flock's database.

"Under Flock, we are all under investigation, every day, every time we get into our cars," Viet Trinh, a history professor and security expert at Ohio State University, said.

The system poses a constitutional threat to anyone living in the U.S., Trinh said.

For others, like online security researcher Benn Jordan, Flock's rollout poses potential issues for a mass data leak. Jordan told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that he had personally "accessed Flock cameras that had no passwords."

While UTD PD has not released information whether Flock has helped searches, internal university documents obtained by *The Retrograde* cited four alleged instances of UT-Tyler using Flock for arrests in 2021 as evidence of the system's efficacy.

One UTD student who wished to remain anonymous during pending litigation said that UTD PD's use of Flock had helped them track down a stolen vehicle. *The Retrograde* could not confirm nor disprove the veracity of that statement.

The reasons behind Flock's usage

Internal users of UTD PD's Flock database have the option to input a "reason" when conducting a network search. Adding a reason is not required to search the system.

Of the 24 searches *The Retrograde* has access to, 10 include a reason. Among them, "investigation" was cited three times, "reckless driving" twice and "additional offense" four times. One search, however, appears to have nothing to do with police work and is logged only once: on July 3 at 4:56 p.m., a reason logged reads, "SUBJ is ex boyfriend, need to see when he left campus."

SEE FLOCK, PAGE 3

PHOTOS BY TYLER CRIVELLA | RETROGRADE STAFF PHOTO COLLAGE BY GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

Student Affairs VP Gene Fitch resigns

After 11 years in office, vice president Gene Fitch steps down

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Retrograde Staff

On August 17 at 2 p.m., UTD President Prabhas Moghe announced the resignation, effective immediately, of Student Affairs Vice President Edmund "Gene" Fitch to faculty and staff only.

Fitch oversaw the Division of Student Affairs since June 1, 2015. Neither Fitch nor Moghe provided a specific reason for the resignation. Moghe said that Dean of Students Amanda Smith will serve as the interim Vice President until a final candidate is selected to fill the role.

Starting in 2010, Fitch served as UTD's Dean of Students, and he later replaced Vice President Darrelene Rachavong in 2015 at the end of her 32 year Student Affairs tenure.

"I'm fortunate the president has put his confidence in me," Fitch said in 2015. "This is what I've been training to do throughout my professional career. I'm looking forward to continuing to impact students in significant ways."

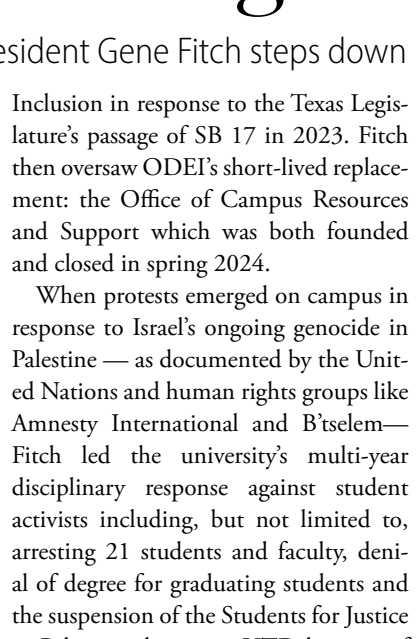
Fitch led the Student Affairs division — which includes the Student Wellness Center, Counseling Center, University Housing, University Recreation, Fraternity and Sorority Life and the Dean of Students office among other student-focused departments — during a period of major growth and controversy for the campus. The student body experienced a 22.75% increase from 24,554 students in fall 2015 to 30,139 as most recently reported in fall 2025.

"During his tenure, he has contributed to the development of student housing, student life programs and other initiatives that have shaped the student experience," Moghe said in the announcement. "He has also provided leadership for the new Student Union and Student Success Center, serving as co-project advocate for the project since its inception, and has helped advance the University's esports program."

Fitch oversaw Student Affairs' response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and spring 2021, including UTD's online event programming and the return to in-person gatherings for fall 2021. In fall 2023, Fitch oversaw the end of UTD's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in response to the Texas Legislature's passage of SB 17 in 2023. Fitch then oversaw ODEI's short-lived replacement: the Office of Campus Resources and Support which was both founded and closed in spring 2024.

When protests emerged on campus in response to Israel's ongoing genocide in Palestine — as documented by the United Nations and human rights groups like Amnesty International and B'tselem— Fitch led the university's multi-year disciplinary response against student activists including, but not limited to, arresting 21 students and faculty, denial of degree for graduating students and the suspension of the Students for Justice in Palestine chapter at UTD because of a 23-second disruption during a graduation ceremony. Fitch told the Student Affairs run newspaper, The Mercury, that he had no involvement with the suspension of SJP — records revealed by The Retrograde that same day showed he was the final arbiter for SJP UTD's fate.

"I am not persuaded by your arguments about the First Amendment," Fitch wrote in his March 11, 2026, ruling against SJP UTD. "I deny your appeal and uphold the sanction of a one-year suspension. I find this sanction is commensurate with the violation."



UTD | COURTESY

Gene Fitch, former vice president of Student Affairs, depicted wearing blue shirt and tie.

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY | RETROGRADE STAFF

Student Fee Advisory Council approves additional funding

If approved by President Moghe, the new 365,000 sqft building will create over 150 student jobs

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY
Assistant Managing Editor

On Aug. 12, the Student Fee Advisory Council reconvened to review and approve new fiscal year 2027 budget increase proposals for A Modest Proposal, the new student union and athletics travelling. These new proposals alone add up to a budget increase of over 1.8 million, making the total SFAC approved budget $22.4 million. This is nearly $4.5 million more than the student fee budget allocated for FY2026.

A large portion of the budget increase occurred due to the construction of the new SU reaching its final stages and its planned opening in January 2027. The rest consisted of increased travel budgets for certain athletic teams and salary increases or formations of AMP staff.

Student fees are additional costs students pay on top of tuition to cover student services, medical services, recreational facilities, the SU, athletic programs and the Student Services Building. The allocation of these fees are determined by a combination of department requests, SFAC approval and President Prabhas Moghe's approval.

With construction of the new SU coming to an end in late October or early November, Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs Dan Goodwin brought forth several requests totalling up to $1.78 million, with the majority dedicated to staffing, furnishing and maintaining the new building. $409,050 will be allocated to pay for new staff positions while $525,000 will go towards funding the "close to 150 to 160 total student employees [that will] come with the build out of the new facility," according to Goodwin. Lastly, $709,814 was requested for both furnishing and maintenance of the new SU, which would include keeping up the planned custom D&D tabletop game tables and a new student-showcase art gallery.

Associate Athletic Director Rob Bogardus requested the allocation of $40,000 equally distributed to the men's basketball, women's basketball, softball and volleyball teams to cover travelling expenses. Additionally, $13,000 was cut down from the track and field budget, as it was "not fiscally responsible," according to Bogardus, to fund the team's participation in indoor competitions. The money was moved elsewhere within the athletics budget, which would now total to 1.8 million.

On behalf of AMP, Director of Student Media Karen Fioretti requested salary increases and salary formations for all management staff positions, adding up the total budget increase to $7,200. For positions that already receive salaries, the proposal asked for a 50 to 100 dollar monthly increase. For positions that do not receive pay at the moment like Assistant Art Director and Assistant Copy Editor, the proposal requested for those positions to be paid $100 per month. These changes would make the total budget for AMP $72,715.

Although these additions were approved by SFAC, they still need to be approved by President Moghe. When asked by The Retrograde, neither Senior Director for Finance and Administration Liz Ramirez nor Student Government President and SFAC member David Baker were able to give an approximate timeline of approval. If there are any significant changes or rejections made by President Moghe, SFAC will reconvene..

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Police Blotter

June 3

1: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred in the Founders Building. Disposition: Arrest made.

June 9

2: Burglary of vehicles reported at University Village Phase 2.

June 11

3: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred at Engineering and Computer Science South.

June 12

4: Theft of property valued between $2,500 and $30,000 reported at the Research and Operations Center.

June 14

5: Operation of vehicle with wrong license plate, failure to maintain financial responsibility, no driver's license, and possession of drug paraphernalia were reported at Campbell Rd/Waterview Pkwy. Arrest made.

June 20

6: Illegal possession of tobacco products and minor in possession of alcohol were reported in Lot J. Arrest made.

June 21

7: Theft of property valued under $100 occurred at the McDermott Library.

June 29

8: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 reported at UV Phase 1, Building 3.

June 30

9: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred at the Student Services Building Addition.

July 3

10: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 reported at the Science Building.

July 5

11: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred in Lot J.

July 13

12: Theft of property valued between $750 and $2,500 reported at Synergy Park North 2.

13: Assault (offensive contact) occurred in Lot J.

July 15

14: Theft of property valued under $100 occurred in Lot M.

15: Assault on a public servant reported in Lot J.

July 23

16: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred at the McDermott Library.

17: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 reported at Vega Hall.

July 26

18: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred at Vega Hall.

July 27

19: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 reported at a bicycle rack behind Andromeda Hall.

20: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 occurred at Capella Hall.

July 29

21: Theft of property valued between $100 and $750 reported at the School of Management.

July 30

22: Criminal trespass reported in Lot J. Arrest made.

July 31

23: Possession of drug paraphernalia and sex offender registration violation occurred at the Activity Center. Arrest made.

August 2

24: Possession of false/fake ID and consumption of alcohol by a minor were reported at Building 46, Phase 6. Arrest made.

August 9

25: Possession of dangerous drugs and a municipal misdemeanor warrant were reported at Old Campbell Rd/Campbell Rd. Arrest made.

August 10

26: False alarm/report occurred at Jonsson.

August 12

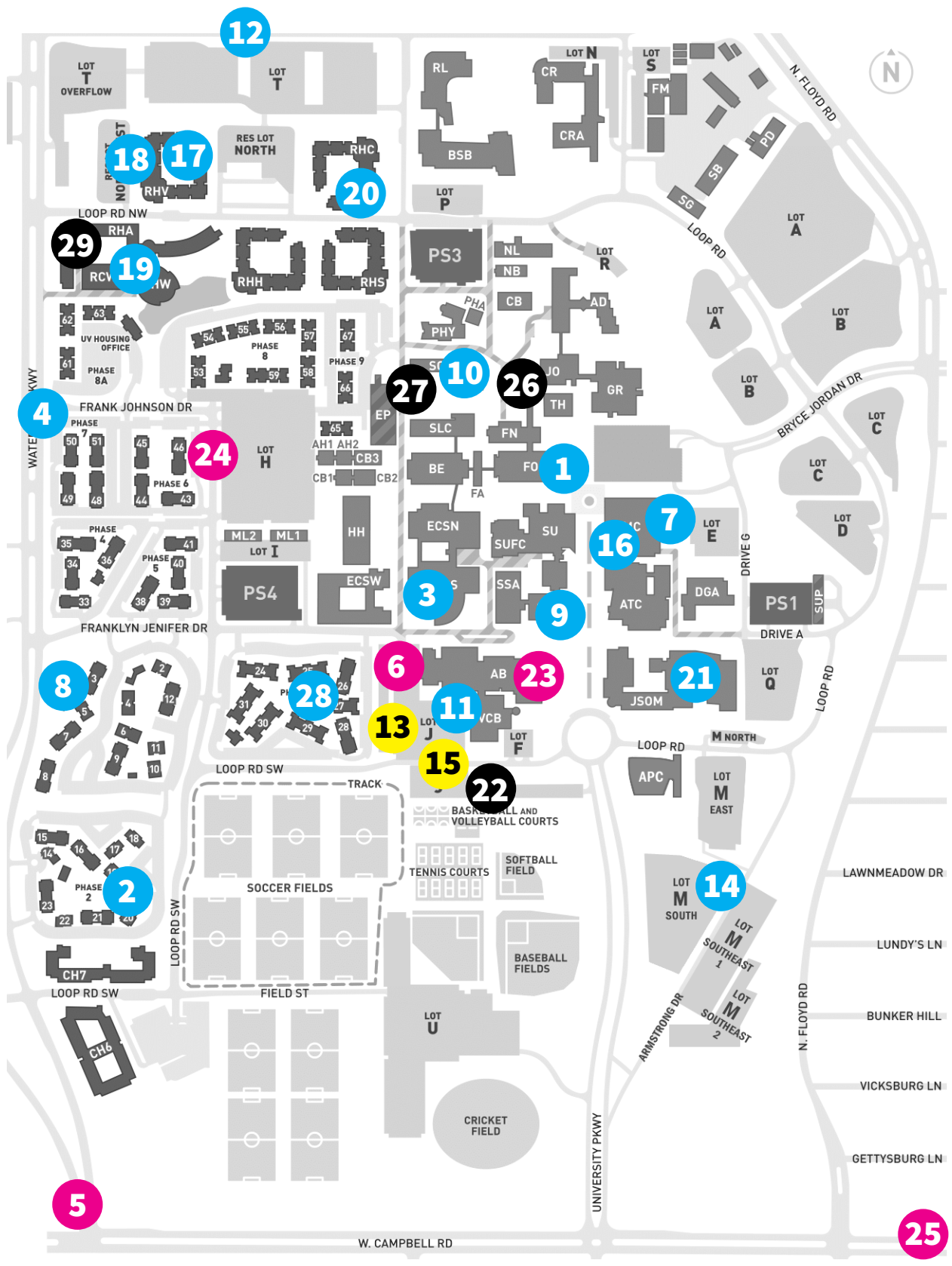
27: Criminal trespass reported at the Science Building. Arrest made.

August 13

28: Burglary of vehicles reported at Building 26, 2200 Waterview Pkwy.

August 14

29: Criminal trespass, evading arrest/detention, failure to identify, and giving false information were reported at Andromeda Hall. Arrest made.



MAP: UTD | COURTESY

LEGEND

- THEFT & BURGLARY
- ASSAULT & DISTURBANCE
- TOBACCO & DRUG OFFENSE
- OTHER CRIMES

TX's anti-ABA shift will impact you, pre-laws

A recent Supreme Court of Texas accreditation order could deem law degrees earned here invalid in other states

ANDREA NGUYEN
Retrograde Staff

On Jan. 6, the Supreme Court of Texas amended its Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Texas, changing the definition of an "approved law school" to one accredited by the Supreme Court of Texas rather than the American Bar Association. The Supreme Court of Texas stated that the goal of the change was to provide "simple, objective and ideologically neutral criteria" for law school accreditation.

This shift in definition will effectively create two types of law schools in Texas: nationally recognized ABA-accredited schools and Texas-only recognized schools. While the Supreme Court of Texas has not yet changed their law school accreditation criteria from what was previously required by the ABA, they stated in their decision that they intend to work with law schools who wish to achieve accreditation that do not currently meet ABA standards.

The biggest issue these court-only accredited law schools will face is degree portability. Since the overwhelming majority of the nation requires graduates to have degrees from ABA-accredited schools to become licensed lawyers, students from non ABA-accredited schools will find it difficult to practice in other states.

Like many pre-law students, EPPS Dean Council Vice President and criminology senior Jasmine Kouhestani doesn't want to spend her entire career in Texas. This makes these non-ABA-accredited schools much less appealing than other law schools in the country.

"If I go to a school in Texas and the university isn't ABA-accredited, being able to go to practice law in a different state would make things substantially harder," Kouhestani said. "That is something that I don't think would be feasible for me and my path."

GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

Editor-in-Chief of the UTD Undergraduate Law Review and cognitive science senior Skandha Gopinath says that this expansion of eligible law schools may also have consequences on the quality of legal education in Texas.

"The question really comes down to if they're going to get a quality education that lets them pass the bar [exam] and be an effective lawyer," Gopinath said. "People who might not have been able to get into an ABA-accredited law school would then be going to one of these unaccredited law schools which would one, take their money, and two, not give them the proper legal education they need to pass the bar [exam] and be effective lawyers."

The Supreme Court of Texas emphasized their desire to establish "ideologically neutral" accreditation standards. This emphasis on "ideologically neutral" criteria emerged in the wake of the ABA's conflicts with the second Trump administration and it has the potential to affect every public law school in Texas.

These political tensions came to a head during controversies about the ABA's stances on diversity. In February of 2025, a letter from U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi warned the ABA that its position as the federally recognized body for law school accreditation could be revoked if the ABA did not end its diversity and inclusion mandates. Soon after, the ABA repealed its diversity requirement. Then in March, the ABA released a statement that criticized the Trump administration for targeting judges and other legal professionals that acted against the administration's interests.

> "The ABA isn't perfect, but it's a national standard. There is no replacement."
>
> **— Jasmine Kouhestani**

The Texas state government has also been critical of the ABA. In 2025, Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice James D. Blacklock criticized the ABA in his February State of the Judiciary address for "aggressively taking sides in the fight going on in Washington about the scope of the president's executive power."

While the Supreme Court of Texas stated that their decision intended to provide "stability, certainty and flexibility" to Texas law schools, Gopinath doubts whether this change is truly aimed at benefiting legal education.

"It just seems more like a way to weaken the independent control that the ABA has over Texas schools," Gopinath said. "I think this is just part of a broader trend where we're seeing the judicial branch, both at the state level and also on the national level, become more and more politicized."

Dean of the University of Texas School of Law Robert Chesney authored an official opinion on the Supreme Court of Texas's desire to part with the ABA where he stated that many law schools, including his own, had incentives to maintain ABA accreditation.

However, if Texas' government decides that the ABA's requirements remain too partisan and comes into conflict with legislation like Senate Bill 17, these incentives to maintain ABA accreditation would become irrelevant to state compliance. This means that public law schools looking to maintain national degree portability, including The University of Texas School of Law, University of Houston Law School and Texas A&M Law School could be affected by the change whether they want to or not.

Prior to the ruling, the University of Texas Law School was among Kouhestani's top law school choices, as it is consistently ranked as the top law school in the state and among the top 20 in the nation. Even though the university has not separated from the ABA, the chance that it might in the future is too much of a risk to take for many students.

"I'm trying to get into a law school that is widely known so that I have the options and the doors open to go wherever I want," Kouhestani said. "Now that UT [Law School] is deviating away from the ABA, that just puts everything into question."

The University of Texas School of Law has already been affected by the closure of UT Austin's diversity and inclusion offices, and The University of Houston Law School was impacted by the termination of the university's LGBTQ+ Resource Center. If Texas were to reject the ABA completely to remain "ideologically neutral," its public universities could be forced to abandon their ABA accreditation statuses.

"The ABA isn't perfect, but it's a national standard," Kouhestani said. "What is the new standard for Texas? There is no replacement. This is an issue and this is something that we need to keep an eye on."

FLOCK
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Reason logs are not automatically checked by Flock Technologies. In North Carolina, a law enforcement officer is accused of falsely inputting 31 reason logs, such as "burglary" or "robbery," to track their boyfriend's ex-wife.

The issue of Flock misuse is not isolated to one state.

On Aug. 22, Megan Reyna reported that a Texas police officer was fired for using Flock ALPRs over 2,300 times to search for an ex-partner. The Washington Post also reported on Aug. 22 that at least 50 police officers have been accused of misusing Flock cameras nationwide.

Responses and resistance on campus

On July 10, UTD PD administrative assistant Jill Brandenburg logged three invoices — all for the same reason: ALPRs on campus had been vandalized and repairs were needed.

The internal invoices obtained by The Retrograde each indicated that each repair cost $350, totalling $1,050 for all three ALPR wires that had been cut.

Each incident took place in relative proximity along Waterview Parkway, leaving camera 12 the only operable ALPR in the southwest quadrant of campus.

While various UTD students have posted online on Reddit and Instagram, no substantial action, protest or complaint has been reported. Overwhelmingly, online student sentiment appears to be against UTD PD's relationship to Flock.

Across 21 different Flock-related messages on UTD's student-run Discord, not one expressed positive sentiment toward Flock's ALPRs. 19 of the 96 messages related to Flock on r/utdallas, a Reddit page for UTD students, favored the technology. The majority of posts across both platforms has had a recent uptick in popularity.

"The biggest invasion of privacy is Flock cameras on public roads," Reddit user golfer-tech said.

Looking ahead

Local activists have largely taken to city councils as a means of protesting the technology. The city of Richardson, for instance, voted Aug. 10 to increase transparency on their Flock cameras.

Read the rest of this story online at retrogradenews.com

A first look inside JSOM III

The new building features AI classrooms, a Starbucks and new student lounges

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Retrograde Staff

ALEXANDER LAWLESS
Retrograde Staff

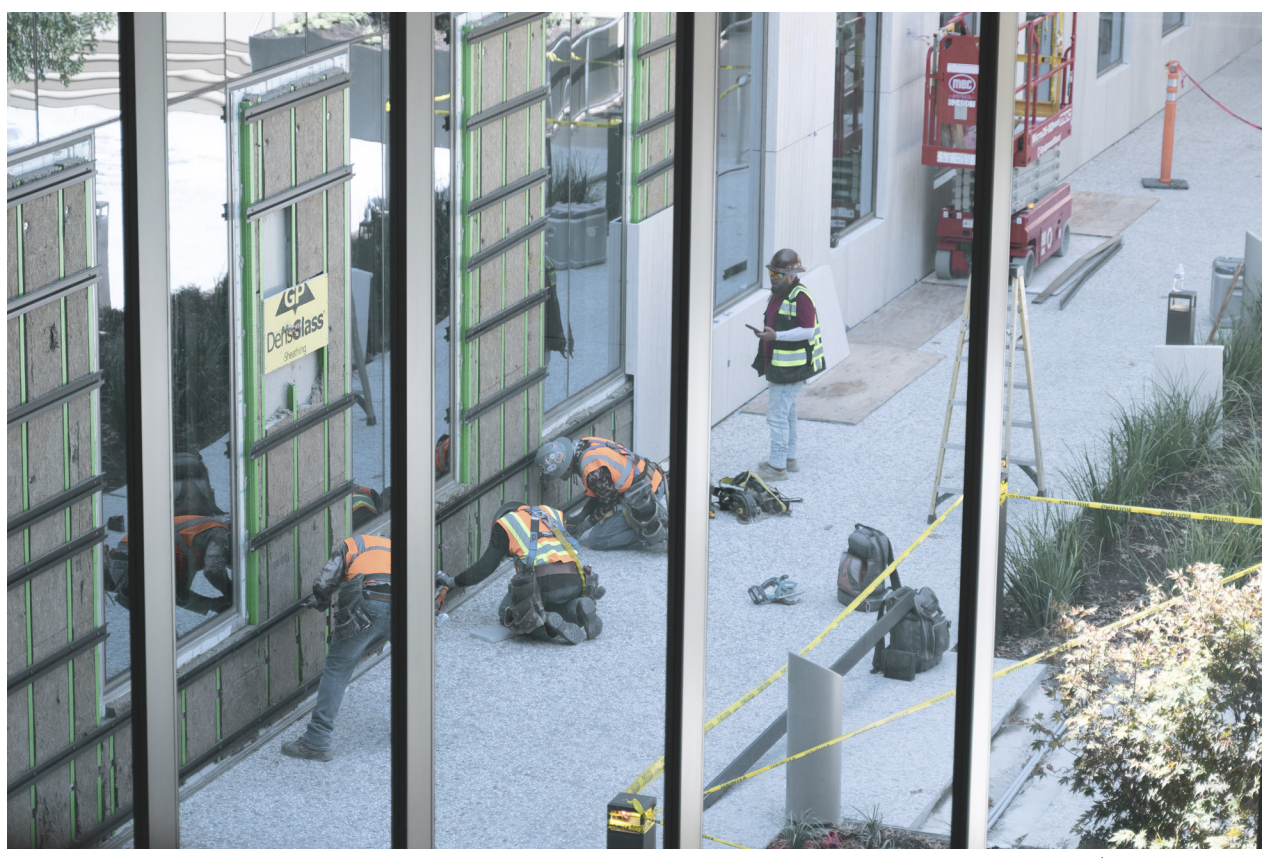
After months of construction, the Naveen Jindal School of Management's third building is now open. The building, which will start hosting classes this fall, brings with it new classroom space, more study areas and UTD's second Starbucks.

JSOM associate dean Gaurav Shekhar gave *The Retrograde* a guided tour of the building. Shekhar said he was excited about the new opportunities the space would give to students.

A large common space area dominates the first floor of JSOM III which includes a new Starbucks as well as tables and a stage for students to study, socialize and host events. JSOM associate dean Gaurav Shekhar said that they planned on installing a "very tasteful" and "very Dallasy" mural as well as additional water features and fountains to make students feel comfortable in the new space.

In total, the three story building adds an additional 125,000 square-feet to the interconnected JSOM complex. The second and third floors are built to house a mix of classrooms and faculty office, with floor-to-ceiling glass doors on offices to create what Shekhar described as a space for transparent connection.

Final touches are still being placed. Shekhar said students can expect the building to change with them throughout the fall semester. JSOM dean Hasan Pirkul said that as offices are completed, the school will be moving all undergraduate resources, staff and advisors into the new building.



PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER LAWLESS | RETROGRADE STAFF

ATEC unveils film production program

UTD is branching out from theoretical film approaches to hands-on film experiences

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY | RETROGRADE STAFF

SUKRITI SINHA
Retrograde Staff

UTD's ATEC department is constructing a new film production program, marking the university's first practical filmmaking curriculum.

The addition will be initiated by the launch of two foundational classes, FILM 2330: Foundations of Production and FILM 2335: Foundations of Post-Production. Each course will not require any pre-requisites and will be open to any student interested in the industry.

The classes will serve as an introduction to hands-on filmmaking as well as the language, culture, collaboration and overall experience surrounding a movie set in the industry.

These courses will later allow students to take more advanced courses in cinematography, color grading and editing as ATEC builds a full-fledged, standalone film production major.

This fall, FILM 2330 and FILM 2335 will be taught by new professor, Ryan Park, an experienced Korean-American filmmaker and production studio owner.

Returning professor Rowena Pedrena is an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning documentary filmmaker who will continue to offer Introduction to Screenwriting this fall. Pedrena has already played a major role in fleshing out the new film production program.

The introduction of the new major and courses follows a plan that has been in development since the 2022 merger of the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication (ATEC) and the School of Arts and Humanities (AHT).

The merger gave the combined school a vast set of new resources and opportunities including audio studios, computer labs, production equipment and the consolidated animation and film faculty that UTD is known for today. Now, the merge has allowed the school to create faculty positions and focus on a new, production-based film program.

UTD is not a new player when it comes to film studies; ATEC has taught the historical and theoretical aspect of cinema for two decades through the film concentration within the existing Visual and Performing Arts program and has produced many students with alternative filmmaking skills through its animation, games and audio programs.

Despite the various courses teaching the historical and theoretical aspect of cinema within the existing Visual and Performing Arts program, ATEC has thus far lacked the faculty and resources exclusively catered to production and industry standards surrounding filmmaking.

"So many students from JSOM, from ECS, from EPPS, from BBS, tell us that they want to make films," Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Associate Professor of Visual and Performing Arts and Film Studies Shilyh Warren said. "We want to provide hands-on, crew-based industry standard production classes for students who really want to move in that direction, but we also want students in other majors to come and learn the basics, and see where that will take them."

SJP SUES UTD

This lawsuit comes after what plaintiffs described as two years of viewpoint discrimination and selective brutality

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On May 19, Students for Justice in Palestine Dallas announced that they, alongside five UTD students and alumni, are suing nineteen members of UTD's administration and police force for alleged violations of their constitutional rights to free speech, protection from unreasonable searches without a warrant and equal protection of the law.

Elbially Law filed the lawsuit May 15 in the U.S. District Court of the Northern District Of Texas Dallas Division on behalf of SJP Dallas, Nouran Abusaad '24, Casey Choi '24, Belal Elseisy '25, Mousa Najjar '24 and history senior Chengyang Zhou.

The suit alleges that university officials used extreme and disproportionate force against students, including placing peaceful students in a chokehold, placing SJP Dallas under an undue level of surveillance to limit their political expression and repeatedly retaliating against students and alumni in violation of both their First and 14th Amendment rights.

The claims

The 51-page lawsuit specifically alleges that the university violated the First, Fourth and 14th Amendment rights of the plaintiffs.

It claims that UTD administration coordinated with the UTD Police Department to suppress pro-Palestinian student activism, manifesting in arrests, criminal prosecutions and disciplinary measures taken against pro-Palestinian students and SJP as a whole.

In the case, plaintiff Zhou claims that, following the spring 2025 commencement ceremony, held on May 15, 2025, UTD police officer Eric Willadson "lunged at him and yanked him by the backpack" and utilized excessive force through "a forceful chokehold," causing Zhou to be "unable to breathe," all while he hadn't shown signs of resistance nor weapon possession.

UTD administrators have previously changed policy in direct response to SJP to limit their activism on campus, banned the use of chalk on campus and implemented overnight bans on expressive speech, in accordance with state law, during this period.

On April 3, 2025, Tricia Losavio, defendant and associate dean of health and wellness initiatives, told members of SJP to stop drawing with pro-Palestine messages in chalk at the plinth because "The policy supersedes your First Amendment."

At the time, political science junior and SJP student organizer Aysha Ahmed said she saw the restriction as just another in the set of procedural hurdles the university threw exclusively at SJP.

> "Once they have reviewed their policy, in almost all these instances they have found we are actually doing nothing wrong and so we have been able to continue with our acts of protest because we are well within our First Amendment rights to protest."
>
> **— Aysha Ahmed**

"All of these things are just examples of how they plan on repressing us," Ahmed said. "Once they have reviewed their policy, in almost all these instances they have found we are actually doing nothing wrong and so we have been able to continue with our acts of protest because we are well within our First Amendment rights to protest. But that doesn't stop the silencing effect their baseless violation claims have in the moment. They may try to silence us, but our voices deserve to be heard in the ways we choose to protest within our rights."

Likewise, the plaintiffs allege that their right to assemble and express complaints or disagreement with actions taken by government officials was infringed upon through the actions taken by the defendants.

Additionally, they said that their freedom to speak or write about their grievances was also curtailed by UTD's alleged campus crackdown of free speech.

The context

The lawsuit was filed one year after the arrests of Zhou and Elseisy for the 28-second "disruption" the two participated in, alongside other students, which involved walking out of the spring 2025 commencement ceremony while chanting numerous phrases including "we are all SJP."

According to SJP organizer and UTD Software Engineering junior Sarah Khalid, the organization intentionally chose to file the lawsuit on May 15 as the date simultaneously marks two significant events including the pro-Palestine student walkout at UTD's commencement ceremony leading to the disciplinary proceedings against SJP, as well as the start of the Nakba, the 78 year long displacement of Palestinians by Israel.

"After our suspension, we made it very clear that we want to continue pushing forward our demands for UTD to cut all ties with genocide and occupation," Khalid said. "This [lawsuit] is a strategic decision on our part to push forward our demands on a different front because we are targeting a war hungry university that's eager to be complicit in the genocide of Gaza and the occupation of Palestine."

How normal is this?

This SJP Dallas lawsuit is not the first instance of legal action against UTD regarding its alleged discrimination to pro-Palestine individuals. On Aug. 5, 2025, assistant professor of art history Ali Asgar Alibhai filed suit against UTD, claiming his participation in a protected speech act was unlawfully targeted by the university. His lawsuit was followed by an Oct. 20, 2025, case filed by history professors Ben Wright and Rosemary Admiral, both of whom were arrested alongside Alibhai on May 1, 2024. Litigation in both cases is ongoing.

SJP Dallas' lawsuit comes shortly after UT Austin student Ammer Qaddumi sued his university for a similar alleged infringement on free speech. Similar suits have been filed at universities across the US including the University of Florida and the University of Michigan. The University of Maryland's SJP chapter won a settlement of $100,000 against its university for imposing a ban on students' vigil for Gaza.

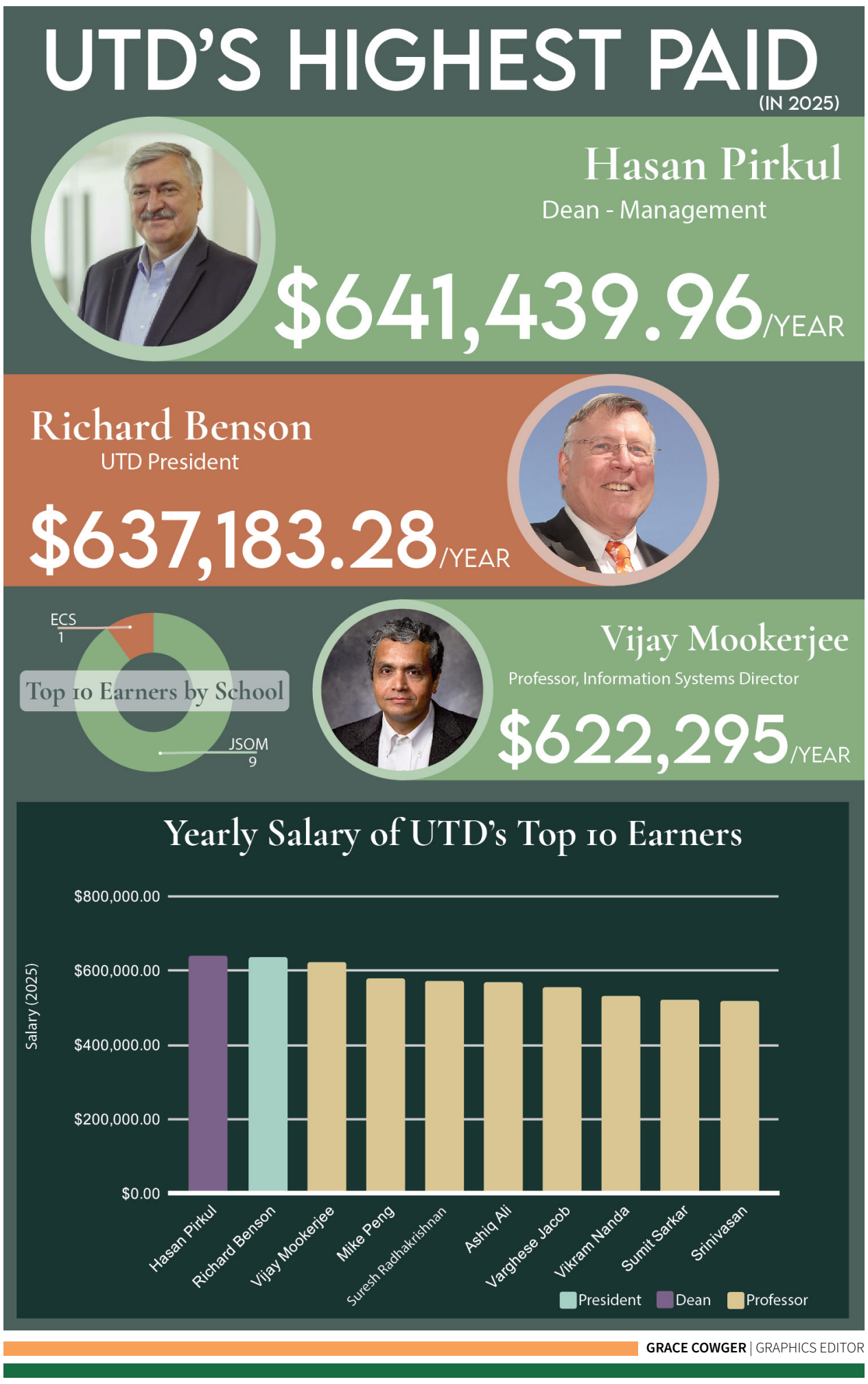
What awaits?

Through the lawsuit, the plaintiffs demand that the court acknowledges the violation of their constitutional rights, concede that the actions of the defendants were done in bad faith and purposeful ignorance of the plaintiffs' rights and that the plaintiffs receive relief and recovery of all damages as the court sees fit.

On a broader scale, SJP hopes to prevent the setting of a precedent that normalizes the violation of peoples' constitutional rights, political speech suppression and brutalization of students.

"Obviously we want SJP to get reinstated but there has to be accountability so that this doesn't continue to happen in the future," Elbially said. "We can't have students choked out on campus and [have] nothing happen to the officer. He [Willadsen] violated their policies really clearly."

Khalid said that UTD has already shown the lengths they will travel to suppress the pro-Palestinian student movement and abuse students to protect profits that are tied to the genocide in Palestine.



GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

The Retrograde
introduces:
ESSENTIAL RESOURCE KIT
The Short Edition
Check out the full thing at tinyurl.com/UTDresources
or on our website homepage!
GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR, FAREEHA CHOUDHURY | RETROGRADE STAFF

New to campus? Here's a quick guide to resources everyone wishes they knew about sooner.

We've listed the resources we think are the biggest gamechangers.

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY
Assistant Managing Editor

Welcome back to campus everyone! Hopefully the heat didn't melt you just yet because knowing Texas, it's here to stay.

Over the summer, *The Retrograde* has been hard at work trying to figure out how we can better serve the campus community. After talking to so many of y'all over the summer, we remembered how chaotic of a process it is to settle into campus life.

In response, we've sifted through dozens of websites (and pamphlets), and have finally compiled an extensive list of UTD's resources. You can see the full guide on the website, but for now, here's a quick list of what we think are the most essential ones.

Emergency numbers to save

In any extreme, time-sensitive situation, always dial 911. For medical emergencies on campus, the number to call is 972-883-2222. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, a mental health professional accessible 24/7 by 972-883-8255.

Student Success Center

The Student Success Center houses multiple programs aimed to give students more personalized academic help. These range in style from 1-on-1 help to class-like tutoring sessions so students can pick what works best for them. All the details of each opton can be found on the SSC website.

Student Health Center

The SHC is where all students can receive primary and preventative healthcare on campus at low cost. Services include routine checkups, free flu vaccines, sexual assault nurse exams, chronic disease treatment and more, which are all available by appointment only.

Comet Cupboard

The Comet Cupboard is the on-campus food pantry serving all UTD students regardless of income status — no questions asked, nor documentation requested. Students can come in twice a week, but are required to watch a video and take a short quiz beforehand and bring their comet cards upon arrival.

Clothing Closets of Campus

There are two clothing closets on campus. The first one, Temoc's Closet, allows students to pick out clothes of various styles as well as limited hygiene products to keep. JSOM's Comet Closet is geared towards those who need to borrow professional wear for a limited amount of time.

Computer Labs

Across campus, several buildings house computer labs open to students for free. These computers often have specialized software necessary for students, like Adobe Creative Cloud. Here is a map created by yours truly listing all the different ones across campus accessible by all students.

Pre-Professional and Undergraduate Advising Offices

Each school in UTD has a designated Undergraduate Advising Office composed of advisors who help students navigate their academic life. The pre-professional advising offices, like the Health Professions Advising Center, also help with this. But more importantly, they clear up what students should be doing besides academics as well.

Campus Map

The UTD Campus Map can help anyone find the room or building they are looking for on campus. If location permissions are enabled, users can utilize the "Directions" feature to view a path leading the user to their destination. Destinations are not limited to specific rooms or buildings, as the map includes locations like printers.

Nebula Labs

Nebula Labs' UTD Trends lets you view grade distributions, professor reviews and class difficulty ratings. UTD Clubs lists all the active student organizations on campus. UTD Rooms displays the availability of rooms across campus.

While these are some of the best resources, there are dozens more all around campus. That's why I again implore you to visit our web page, or to go to tinyurl.com/UTDresources which is a much more extensive list than what we've curated here in print.

Summer Roundup: blast off to SPACE!

A quick overview of the changes sweeping campus as UTD President Moghe begins his second year

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Staff Writer

This summer UTD experienced its second consecutive summer shake up. Business students will be greeted with the smell of fresh paint and clean floors as the newest academic building on campus — JSOM III — begins operations, and the institutional backbone behind every committee on campus now has written policy behind it.

Construction

Over the summer, construction on JSOM's roughly $98 million expansion was finalized with classes, offices and student organizations expected to fill JSOM III this fall. The new academic building brings with it UTD's second Starbucks as well as new study spots and 12 classrooms.

The new Student Union and Student Success Center is on track to finish construction later this year with a planned opening in January 2027, just in time for the new semester. On Aug. 20, 2026, the SpawGlass, the construction company overseeing the project, celebrated the completion of one million man-hours to build what will soon be UTD's largest set of buildings. In its construction updates, SpawGlass said that final touches will continue to be placed on the building in the coming weeks.

The finished SU complex will house Dunkin' Donuts, a Tex-Mex spot called Copperhead Jack's, Jimmy John's, a larger Halal Shack and a larger TeaCo.

Policy

Among the most substantial changes to policy this summer came in the form of the complete restructuring of the university facilities committee. The facilities committee was formerly a university-wide facility made up of students, faculty, staff and administrators who discussed the state of campus facilities, ongoing construction and potential construction projects. According to bioengineering professor Clark Meyer, the final chair of the facilities committee, the committee did not meet a single time during academic year 2025-26.

"[The facilities committee] has been sunset and a new committee with a related function will be created in the fall by the University President and led by Rafael," Meyer said.

In place of the facilities committee, UTD has established the Space Planning and Capital Evaluation committee — better known as the SPACE committee. As outlined in the newly created UTDPP3122, SPACE "is charged with evaluating space and capital needs across academic, research, administrative and auxiliary functions and providing recommendations to the President that support effective, data-informed use of university facilities and resources that align with the university's strategic priorities and master plan."

Instead of a body composed of representatives from across the campus community, SPACE is made up of only vice presidents.

IVA DAVIS | RETROGRADE STAFF

The five voting members of SPACE are Vice President for Administration Rafael Martín, who serves as the chair of the committee; Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Marc Christensen; Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Brian Ten Eyck; Vice President for Budget and Finance Orkun Toros; Vice President for Research and Innovation Joseph Pancrazio. Its non-voting members include the associate vice president for facilities management, the assistant vice president for engineering, construction and planning as well as the assistant vice president for IT architecture and operations.

Read the rest of this story by visiting retrogradenews.com

INSIDE THE MONEY OF TX-32

TYLER CRIVELLA
Editor-in-Chief

On Nov. 3, 2026, Republican candidate Jace Yarbrough will face Democratic candidate Dan Barrios in Texas' 32nd U.S. House of Representatives race. The candidates are almost polar opposites in approach, politics and — as this article highlights — finances. The Retrograde has broken down each campaign's financial disclosures made to the Federal Election Commission which publishes reports during election seasons.

Who is backing each candidate?

DAN BARRIOS (D)

Democratic incumbent for the seat Julie Johnson has given $1,000 to Barrios. She is now running for the neighboring TX-33 seat following state-wide redistricting. The two have worked together for years.

Chair of the Board of the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society and Dallas attorney Regina Montoya has donated the maximum for primary contributions, $3,500, to Barrios. She previously ran for Dallas mayor in 2019.

Domingo García, former representative for the Texas House's 104th district and president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, gave $1,000.

Addison-based Democrat and former candidate for Texas' House of Representatives' district 66 Sharon Hirsch gave $250 to Barrios. She ran and lost in both 2018 and 2020 by 391 and 849 votes, respectively.

JACE YARBROUGH (R)

Los Angeles-based billionaire and co-founder of Palantir Technologies Peter Thiel has given the maximum individual contribution possible, $7,000, to Yarbrough.

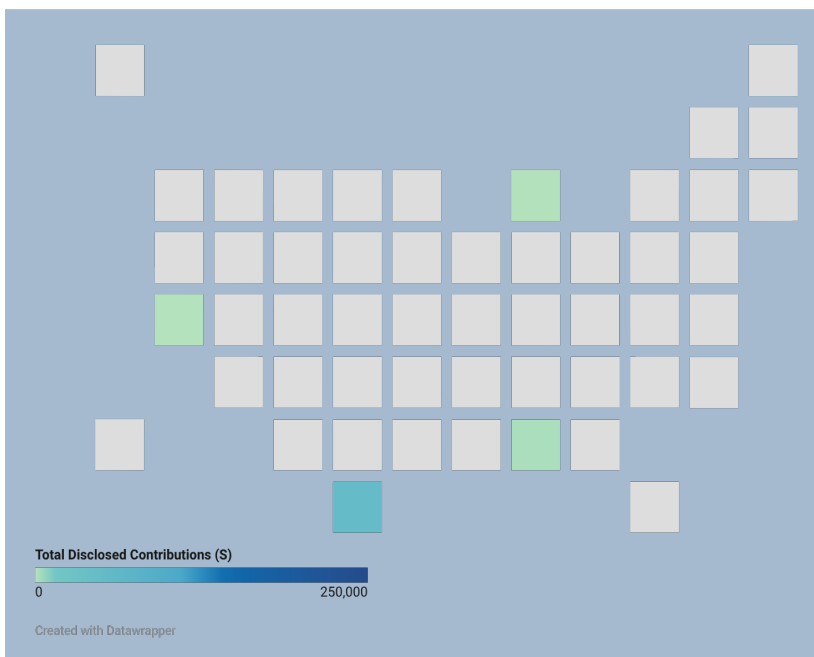
"Thiel's contribution is modest by the standards of modern campaign finance, but large in symbolism," Christopher Wiggins, writer for The Advocate, said.

President Donald Trump has given Yarbrough his "complete and total endorsement" in a post on Truth Social.

According to records obtained by *The Retrograde*, New York City-based right-wing megadonor Tom Klingenstein also gave the maximum election contribution to Yarbrough.

Former leader of the Dallas County Republican Party and conservative activist Doug Deason has given $2,500 to the Republican's campaign.

Where is each candidate receiving contributions from?

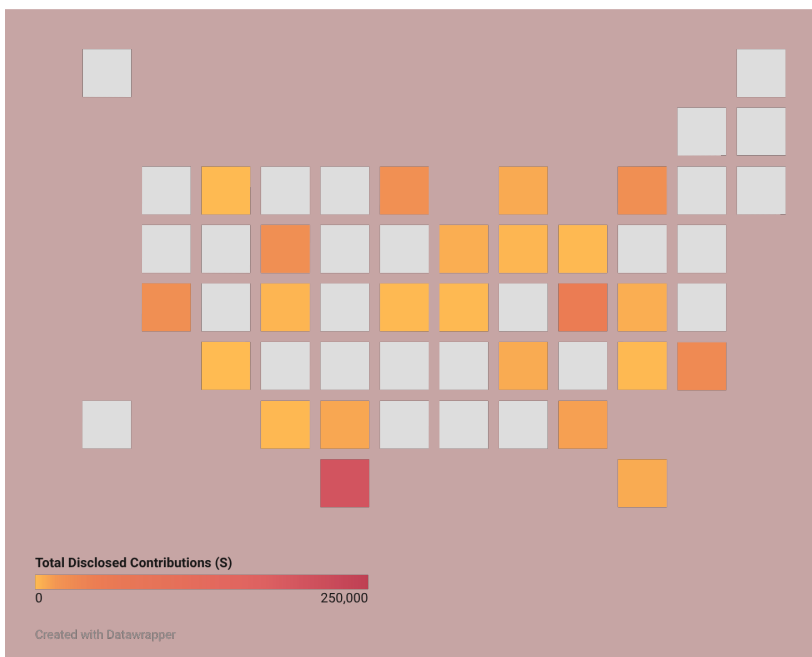


Barrios has received less contributions overall compared to Yarbrough. In individual itemized contributions alone, Barrios reported $54,770 compared to Yarbrough's $282,724.70.

What he has earned is mainly in Texas itself, however. Based on those same calculations, Barrios has about 94% of his campaign contributions from inside Texas, with about 3.6% from Alabama and 1.1% from both California and Michigan.

Barrios' contributions involve little to no funding from political action committees, or PACs, candidate committees, and organizations.

His policy promises explicitly involve removing "money from politics" and he has stressed his want for a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United v. FEC, a 2010 Supreme Court decision that stripped many campaign contribution regulations.



Yarbrough has far more capital behind him. His Texas-only contributions, $201,192, are more than Barrios' entire funding pool.

That being said, when using only publicly available location-based financial data, Yarbrough recieves a minority, about 48%, of his funds from Texas. Virginia, California, Wyoming and New York make up 12%, 7%, 5% and 4.9% of his contributions, respectively.

Yarbrough has a more diversified contribution portfolio compared to Barrios. The Republican candidate recieved about $107,520 from political action committees, or PACs, and $19,500 from candidate committees.

His policy promises are largely based in his endorsement from President Donald Trump. In appearances on Fox News and other outlets, Yarbrough has stressed the need for family values, rigid immigration policy and pro-life abortion measures.

Read the full story online at retrogradenews.com

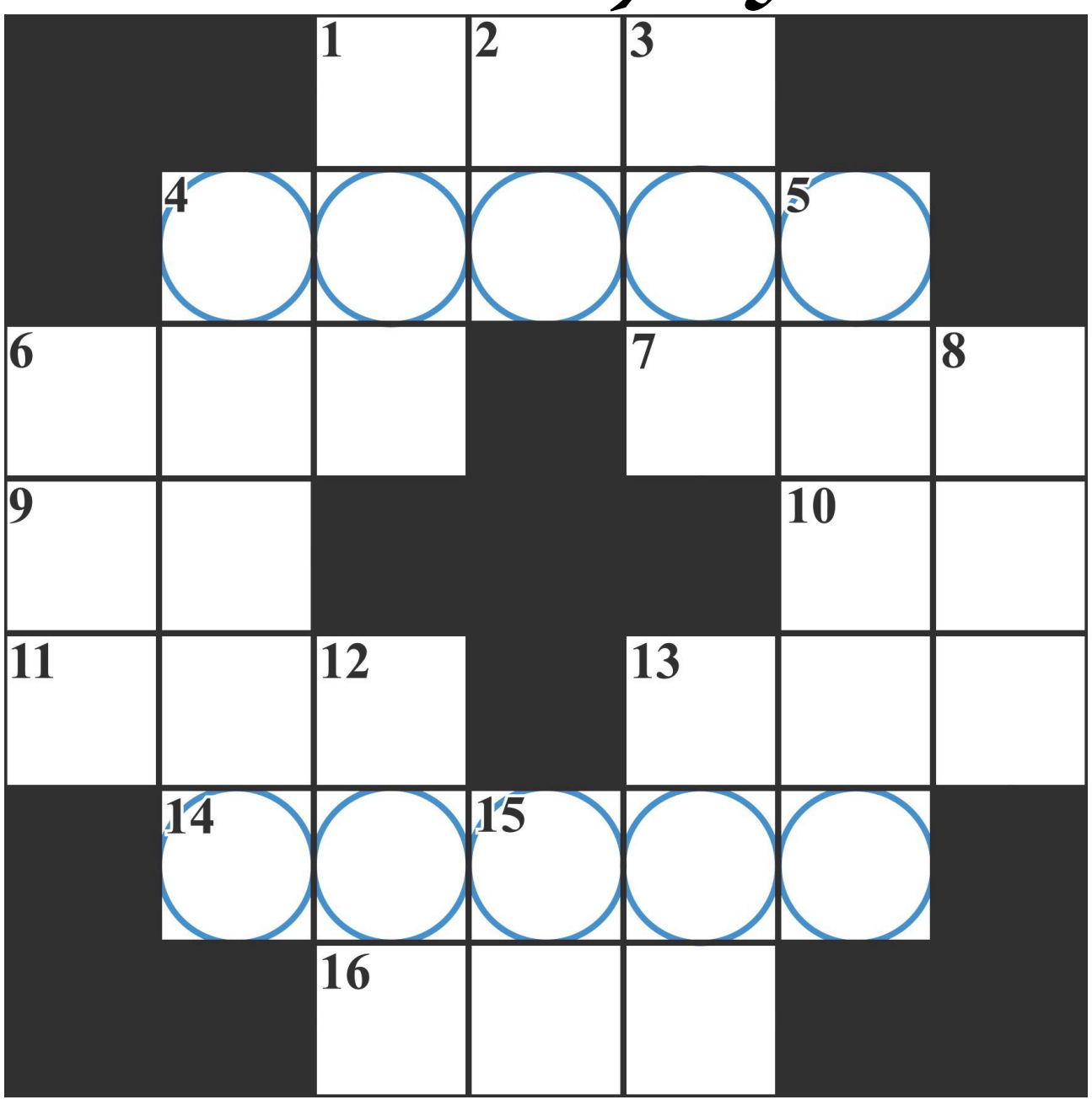
CHARTS AND PHOTO BY
TYLER CRIVELLA | RETROGRADE STAFF

Another Day of Sun--

TYLER CRIVELLA | RETROGRADE STAFF

DIFFICULTY ★★☆☆☆

Answers upside-down below clues



Across

1 Local law school: Abbr.
4 Shimmer
6 Consumed
7 Tax handler: Abbr.
9 Rival state to TX
10 Music storage device spun around chord*
11 Santa's helper
13 Where peas sit together
14 Easy to carry
16 Punk-rock indie music you just wouldn't understand, mom...

Down

1 ___/her
2 1001, numerically
3 Old, in slang
4 Put off
5 Futuristic Disney park
6 Best blackjack card
8 Combine mathematically
12 "Fee, ___, foe, fum"
13 Vietnamese noodle soup
15 Car maker: Abbr.

Need a hint?

Clues that end with "Abbr." are an abbreviation or acronym. Grid spaces with a circle are theme words that tie into the puzzle's title! Clues with "*" are cryptics (see below for more).

***What's the Cryptic?**

10 Across is a special clue called a cryptic, where each word plays a role in the puzzle. In this clue, "music storage device" is the definition of the answer word; "spun around" is the indicator of where the answer is hidden in the clue; "chord" is the fodder that, using the indicator, reveals the answer. In this case, you can look "around" the letters of "chord" to find the answer: **CD**, a disk musical chords might be downloaded onto.

Across
1 SMU
4 Shine
6 Ate
7 CPA
9 CA
10 CD*
11 Elf
13 Pod
14 Light
16 Emo

Down
1 She
2 MI
3 Unc
4 Stall
5 Epcot
6 Ace
8 Add
12 Fie
13 Pho
15 GM

Caption Contest

GRACE COWGER | RETROGRADE STAFF

Instructions: Gaze upon the above image. Ponder its meaning. Then, submit your best caption, as if you were writting a punchline, for the image at **tinyurl.com/RG-CaptionContest** or using the QR code below for a chance to be featured on our website, social media and next print issue. A winner will be crowned by September 14, 2026.

WE'RE HIRING!
• Reporters
• Photographers
• Graphic Artists
• Layout Artists
Visit tinyurl.com/applyRG to hone your skills, expand your network and learn about the inner workings of UTD's campus.

Puzzles

KenKen

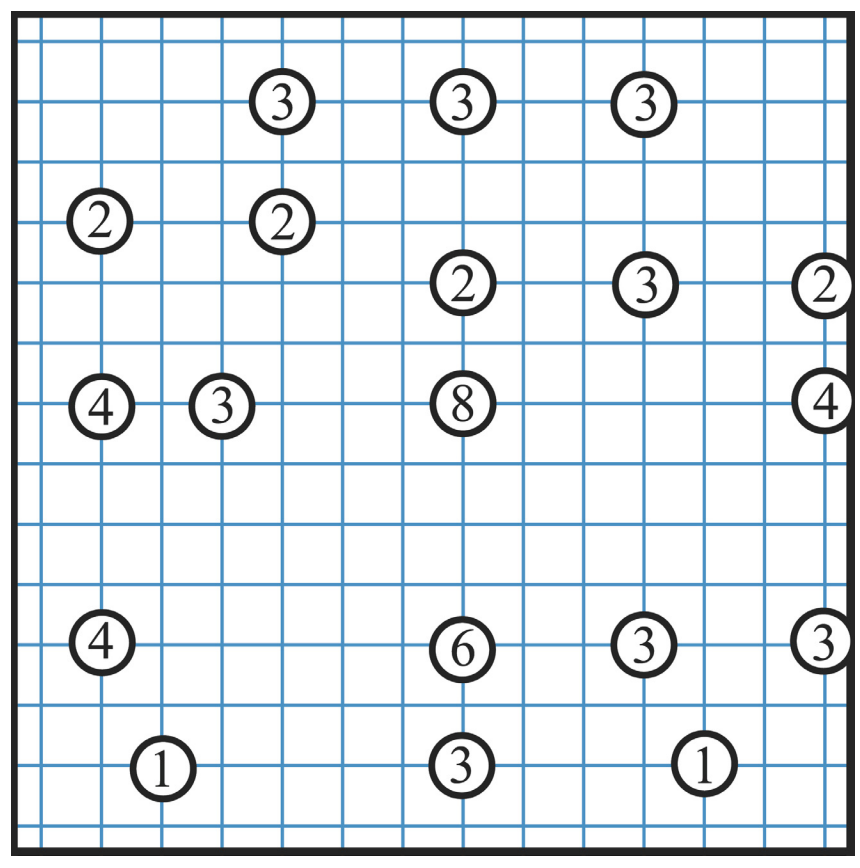
Instructions: Your goal is to fill up the 6×6 grid with numbers 1-6. Each column and row must have exactly one of each number. Each box (outlined with thick black lines) has a target number and a mathematical operation listed in the top-left corner. The numbers in each box must result in the target number when the corresponding mathematical operation is employed. For example, a box with 3+ could be satisfied with 1 and 2, as 1+2=3. Visit our website for a full walkthrough as well as answers to this week's puzzles.

96×		3-		15×	
	6+		36×		
1-		2÷	1-		1-
	17+			12+	
15×					24×
		4÷			

RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

Hashi

Instructions: Connect all islands to one network by drawing only horizontal or vertical lines. Lines may not cross. The total number of lines attached to a given island is the number presented in its circle. Each island may only have two lines attached to it in any given direction.



TYLER CRIVELLA | RETROGRADE STAFF

Gina Hinojosa
for Texas Governor

As you're gearing up for a new semester, I wanted to welcome you back to campus.

I grew up in Brownsville and went to UT Austin. What I found on campus was Texas itself. Panhandle kids and Houston kids, Valley kids and rural kids, people who had worked their way through school and people who had never worried about money. I learned just how big and complicated this state is, and how much promise it holds. That's the part of my education that stayed with me most.

You are about to inherit Texas, and each of you has some idea of the life you want to build here. Maybe you will start a company, teach in a classroom, be an engineer, work in public service, or do something you haven't quite figured out yet. Whatever your piece of the American Dream looks like, I am running for governor to make sure Texas is the place where you can go for it.

You are doing your part but right now, Texas is not holding up its end. State government has spent decades working for insiders and donors while public schools are starved and ordinary Texans pay the corruption tax. Follow the money and you find the answer to almost every question about why things here are harder than they should be. I have spent my career fighting that.

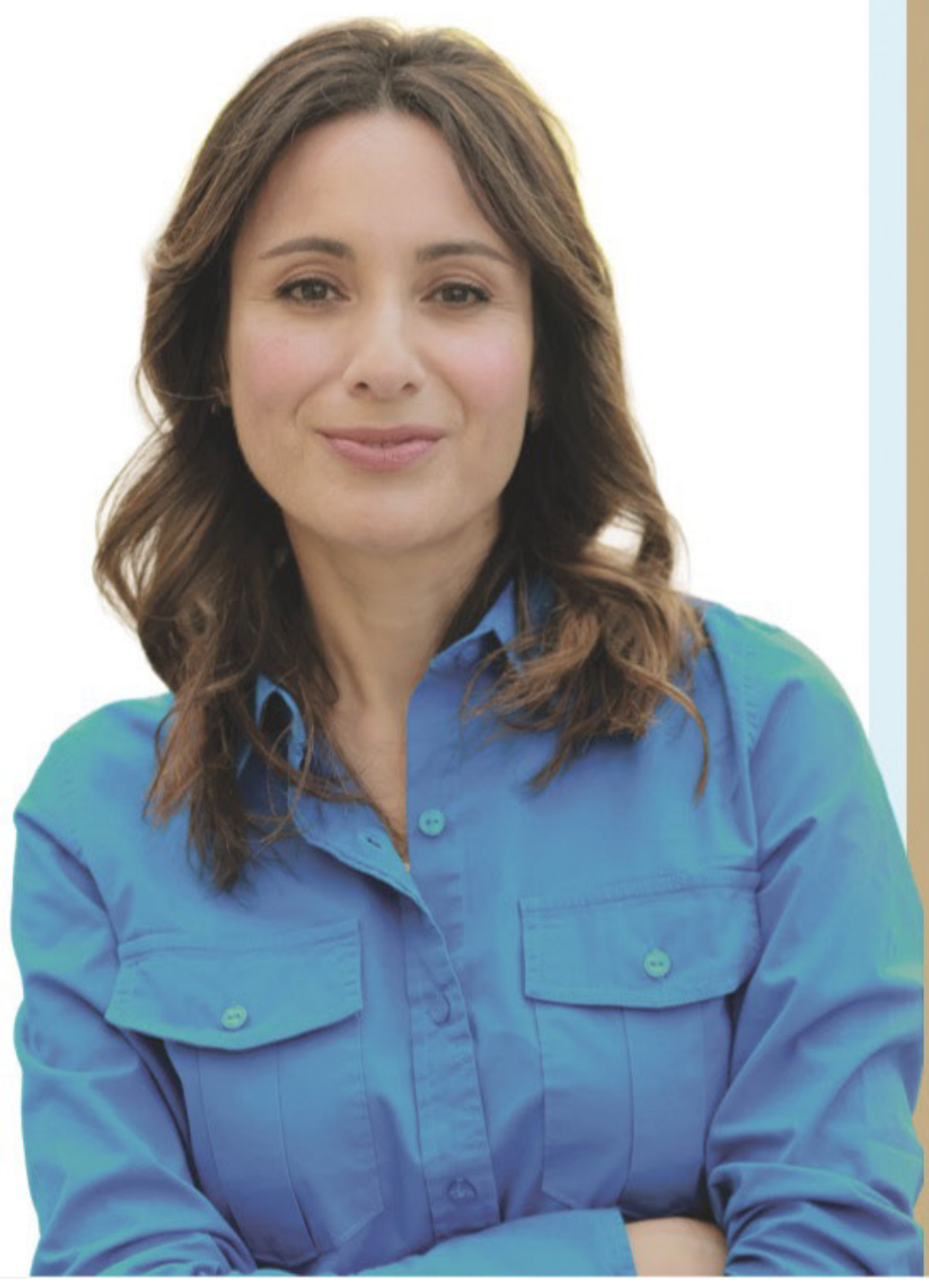
College students across Texas have real power in this election. Power follows participation, and yours will help decide what Texas becomes and who it belongs to.

I believe Texas belongs to all of us. And in November, we prove it.

It's time for a change.
Register by October 5th.
Check your status at IWillVote.com/tx.
Vote on November 3rd.
Bring somebody with you.

Gina Hinojosa

Candidate for Governor



POL. ADV. PAID BY GINA HINOJOSA CAMPAIGN

Alum-run boba store rebrands at soft open

Manna Tea House is serving up tasty teas and comfy hangs with a splash of community flavor on the side

JEANINE ORTIZ BALDAZO
Staff Writer

Just a seven minute drive from UTD, Manna Tea House sits in a quiet corner, inviting customers into a comfortable escape from the stress of daily life.

Inside, the sweet aroma of boba blends with the sound of friends' laughter, surrounded by quiet conversations. Formerly known as Rainbow Teashop, Manna Tea House has returned after a rebrand with a new name, a renewed identity and a delicious new menu.

Its soft opening, held from July 27 through Aug. 1, was just the first step for the shop to reflect its intended purpose. What began as an impulsive business venture turned into a reflection of self-identity and community.

The shop's story began with Jacob Dong and Michael Chen, co-owners of Manna Tea House, who connected during their time at UTD. Even though both studied STEM-related majors, they shared a vision.

"If neither of us could find full-time engineering jobs, then we would start a restaurant together," Dong said.

When both secured jobs respective to their fields, the idea was long forgotten. However, a year and a half after graduating, Dong learned that the owners of Rainbow Tea Shop, a couple looking to start a family, wanted to sell the business he frequented during his student years.

He shared the opportunity for the business venture with Chen, and, with the help of their business partners Rebecca Dong and Aaron Chong, they took ownership of the business in December 2024.

"When I came into this business, it was like diving headfirst," Dong said. "I had an engineering degree and I have a corporate job, but I didn't really know how small businesses worked and I didn't really know anything about the boba industry."

As they learned to manage the business through a soft takeover, the owners recognized that the vision of Rainbow Tea Shop did not align with their personal goals and identity – a realization that sparked the rebrand.

"It was hard for us because it wasn't authentic to who we were," Dong said. "What are we doing all this work for? We advance someone else's vision for what the space should look like and to not be authentic to what we wanted to provide."

The transition into Manna Tea House began in October 2025, where they began redesigning the interior, perfecting the menu and creating a new brand. The name, inspired by the biblical term "manna," is drawn from the question, "What is it?"

For the owners, it represents providing a more comfortable environment and a space where people can have meaningful conversations with their community.

PHOTOS BY SUKRITI SINHA | RETROGRADE STAFF

That vision is reflected in its cozy environment with its natural decor and comfortable seating arrangements for any guest. For the casual visitor, board games ranging from Jenga to Xiangqi, along with a claw machine are sure to entertain.

For visiting students working on last-minute assignments, the shop offers a complementary printer, a whiteboard and free internet access.

The weeklong soft opening event was a quiet introduction to the new space with a buy-one-get-one-free promotion, which encouraged newcomers and frequent visitors alike to share a sweet drink with a loved one. The huge turnout was an unexpected yet pleasant surprise to the owners, who witnessed the community's response.

"Having set our little soft evening kind of helped us to get all those things moving," Rebecca Dong said. "So yeah, we're really, really grateful for everybody who stopped by."

For a generation that's constantly on the move, Manna Tea House offers a place of rest. For customers like Sarah Aranda, supply chain management junior, the drinks stand out as much as the atmosphere.

"It's such a hidden location so you wouldn't expect the flavors to be that good, but it surprised me," Aranda said. "It's really good!"

Now, their next goal is to have a successful grand opening.

The event is set to happen in October, where they are planning to launch their fall menu and welcome guests with exclusive giveaways, both additional perks to their 10% discount for university students.

"A lot of people wait for the perfect opportunity, wait for the perfect idea or wait for the perfect business partners," Dong said. "But the deepest learning is getting your hands and feet dirty, and just going out there and working on what you hope to eventually bring as a business owner."

Manna Tea House is located at 3801 West President George Bush Highway, Suite 116, in Plano, TX.

Meet your campus emergency response team: UEMR

What you wouldn't expect: they're students just like us

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY
Assistant Managing Editor

When someone calls 911 reporting a medical emergency on UTD campus, it's not the police that are first to arrive at the scene. It's not the Richardson ambulance on the way. It's the students of the University Emergency Medical Response team.

UEMR is UTD's registered first responder organization composed of students who went through lengthy training, from childbirth simulations featuring water spraying to mass casualty demonstrations in a dark building with disco music blasting. No matter what medical emergency occurs on campus, they're trained to face it, including one of the most common traumas on campus: skateboard injuries.

Since its start in 2017, the organization has grown immensely, with over 60 EMTs on the team and three to four on-call at all times. Even when campus shuts down as a result of Richardson's once-in-a-lifetime snowstorms, they're always ready to respond. But what those students love about the program isn't just the emergency response experience. For many, like recent UTD alumni and current Administrative Chief of UEMR Taher Ali, it's the family and community that it comes with.

"I'm going into my 4th year, and it has reinforced the fact that I am the luckiest man on earth," Ali said. "UEMR has given me many opportunities to grow and apply my character… and I think that's what UEMR is to me, it's a community and family where I get a chance to improve."

Biology senior and UEMR captain Akshaya Chandrashekhar feels the same and loves to facilitate events that do just that: foster that feeling of family and bring everyone closer together.

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY | RETROGRADE STAFF

"I'll invite everyone who's on my shift all day throughout those 24 hours to come visit … and we'll literally fill out this apartment to the room and we'll just like eat food together, we'll play mafia, we'll just like have one final hurrah, like all of the crews that were on this day that you spent so many hours with at this point, at least I spent so many hours with at this point, so it's just a lovely time."

> "At the end of the day, the hope is to come out of a call [and] make the patient feel better or feel more comfortable with where they're at."
>
> **— Akshaya Chandashekhar**

And the root of that community bond? Everyone's shared dedication to do what is best for those around them, whether it be their fellow UEMR EMTs, their classmates and friends or the UTD population as a whole.

"We're all trying to get each other to be the best we can be and part of that is we all have the shared goal of pursuing a healthcare degree, but we also have the shared goal of caring for our patients as best as we can," Ali said. "I think that's something else that UEMR does really, really well. Everyone here wants to do the best we can for our patients and for our school and our community."

For others, like EMS Director Sheila Elliott, what brings them to the world of emergency medicine is slightly different.

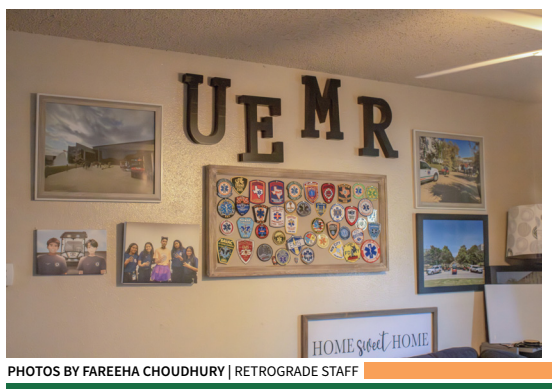
"I was an elementary music teacher for five years when I first started my career… and then one of my twins was born with a heart defect, and so after his third open heart surgery is when I went into the medical field," Elliott said. "I think it was just that passion for wanting to help people and I wanted the knowledge to be able to help my kid you know? I think you feel powerless, you feel inadequate when you don't know what to do."

During shifts, the team goes about their day as they normally would: attending classes, chatting with friends, maybe even watching Love Island at the UEMR apartment.

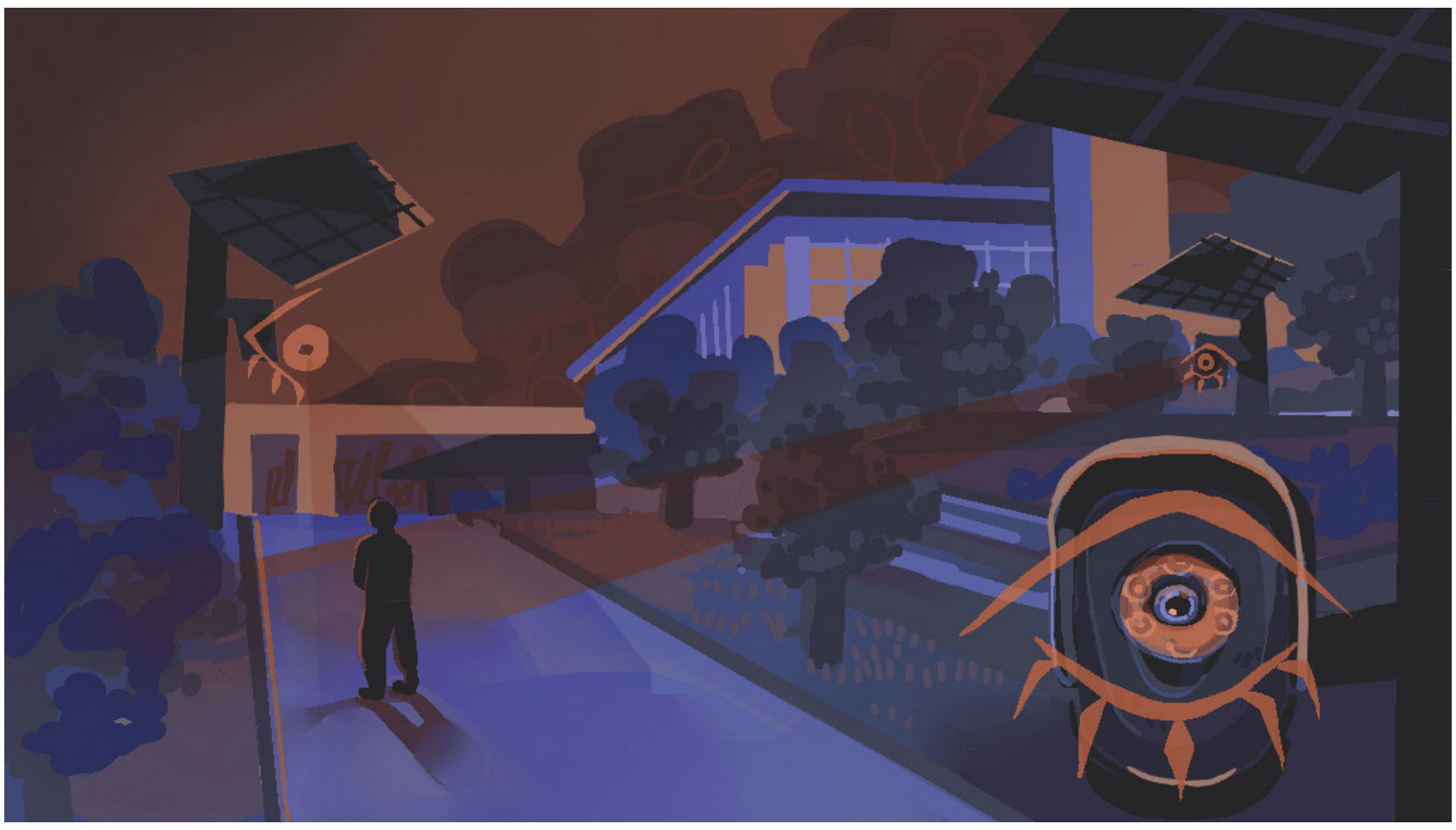
But as soon as the phones start to blare the alarm, they're all off running to answer the call.

The calls they run range from typical lab injuries to severe traumas, but what stands out to them about the work isn't the calls themselves. It's what they mean to those they're helping.

"At the end of the day, the hope is to always come out of a call [and] make the patient feel better or feel more comfortable in some way with where they're at," Chandrashekhar said. "The best calls are the ones where you walk out knowing that you were genuinely able to make a difference that day. They're able to go on with the rest of the day feeling a little lighter."



PHOTOS BY FAREEHA CHOUDHURY | RETROGRADE STAFF



TIAN WANG | RETROGRADE STAFF

UTD needs to stop flocking with student privacy

By installing Flock cameras, UTD clearly ignores student privacy in favor of surveillance methods

HAADIYAH MOHAMMED
Retrograde Staff

Reckless driving. Additional offense. Investigation. These are UTD PD's reasons for searching the 17 Flock cameras around UTD as seen from public search audits. As a university that takes great leaps to violate student free speech on campus, it seems UTD is all too eager to use artificial intelligence powered surveillance cameras to record students entering and leaving campus.

Flock Automated License Plate Readers use AI to constantly record vehicle information including car models, colors and other identifying features such as scratches to add them into the Flock database.

Flock cameras create breaches of privacy and safety for students, staff, and faculty particularly because camera data may be shared without consent and because they pose a risk to student protestors.

Not only do ALPRs record and store every vehicle/scanned plate regardless of whether or not somebody in that vehicle is under suspicion, there is also no public knowledge of how the data is shared. The San Francisco Police Department has shown records that law enforcement "conducted searches on behalf of outside agencies that had no access to SF PD's systems." SF PD had granted access to an intelligence sharing center that shared camera data to other organizations conducting searches for outside agencies, which is illegal under California law.

In Johnson County, TX, the police department used Flock cameras to find a woman who allegedly had an abortion. Police departments may be searching for Flock cameras to restrict or surveil people's access to their reproductive health. This creates an unsafe environment for students dealing with abortion or pregnancy issues that may be interpreted to be illegal under Texas law.

Additionally, there is reason for concern that immigration agencies may be searching through Flock databases. Because UTD shares camera data with Dallas PD, Flock cameras create real danger and harm to students concerned with immigration searches on campus.

Flock ALPRs are particularly concerning to students and faculty that have been targeted by the university and UTD PD such as pro-Palestinian protesters. In 2025, US Border Patrol directly accessed Flock cameras to track down and arrest a protester blocking Border Patrol vehicles with detainees. Law enforcement can now search for protestors by their vehicle plates to arrest them because of an alleged violation of the law, regardless of whether or not the reason is valid. This restricts how students express their dissent when confronting law enforcement or administrators.

"Anyone can be considered a problem," an anonymous mechanical engineering junior said. "This prevents students from expressing themselves or prevents them from expressing a dissenting opinion. People know that if they're going to a protest or a student club, it's being tracked."

Students should hold the university accountable for their installing of Flock ALPRs as they clearly violate student's privacy and trust. Further, students should demand changes to existing policy and university laws to protect students from invasive surveillance.

The best outcome is Flock cameras being removed from campus. This may pose several problems for UTD PD using current camera data for ongoing investigations and will likely be rejected immediately. However, there are other ways to increase student input into how data may be restricted or monitored from Flock cameras. Flock cameras would have to be more localized, meaning that students should be able to request that data not be shared with police agencies, for example Dallas PD, due to camera data being searched by ICE.

Flock cameras should also be audited more thoroughly, so people can track how that data is being used in investigations and whether it is for a good purpose. The police oversight committee may hold annual meetings to review policies they created on Flock usage, and allow students and faculty to suggest any further changes that may be needed. For example, holding a public hearing or a legitimate space for students to speak up and be involved in decisions concerning ALPR cameras would be a step in creating transparent relations between the administrations and the students it continues to ignore in the decision-making process.

UTD's skateboard ban is half-baked

A rushed policy add "a major inconvenience" to campus life

Nathan Dow
Courtesy

I was recently informed of the Eugene McDermott Library's new policy prohibiting skateboards inside the building. While I understand the issues of managing space and ensuring safety for a large student body, the policy was not given enough thought. It was a sudden change and the current accommodations provided to supplement it are laughable. UTD has stated that it will hand out a limited number of bike locks which are useless for locking up a board on a standard bike rack.

I use my skateboard to get around campus fast without the worry of having to lock it up because it's light and carry-able. A standard skateboard takes up no more space than a backpack. Applying the same restrictions to both longboards and small carryable boards is unfair as both are very different items which should not be treated the same way.

If the policy is here to stay, I ask that UTD at least consider practical accommodations. Dedicated skateboard racks in the library lobby would give students a secure place to store their boards. Other buildings on campus already have these, so this isn't an unreasonable ask. UTD should have done this before initiating the policy as failing to do so caused a major inconvenience to students during finals week.

I have already sent an email to the library about my suggestions and have yet to receive a response.

UTD is a large campus, and in the Texas heat, efficient transportation matters. UTD attempts to appear that they care about student safety and wellbeing, but this sudden change in policy doesn't reflect that. I believe that the commitment to student safety and wellbeing should extend to making sure students have accessible and secure options for getting around.

I am graduating this year but am concerned for my fellow comets. I hope that UTD takes my suggestions seriously and takes my feedback into consideration.

GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor's Note: Views expressed in LTTEs are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Retrograde as a publication.

REMOVING UTD'S PRIDE WALL WAS 'NECESSARY, ALBEIT DELAYED, COMPLIANCE' WITH SB 17

An incoming student argues "public educational institutions must serve all students equally, rather than acting as a sandbox for political activism"

DAVID BLACKMAN
Courtesy

The removal of the 'You Belong Here' pride wall at UT Dallas is a necessary, albeit delayed, compliance measure forced by the enactment of Texas Senate Bill 17. I personally brought this display to the attention of Libs of TikTok to ensure that the university's non-compliance would face public scrutiny. SB 17 explicitly prohibits public universities from utilizing state resources to promote ideologically motivated DEI initiatives and political messaging. The fact that the university chose to quietly dismantle the display following this exposure only demonstrates that they were fully aware they were operating outside the boundaries of state law.

My effort to bring accountability to higher education began when I exposed the institutional indoctrination at Penn State Dickinson Law, which was covered by the Washington Free Beacon and is still ongoing. Universities across the nation have mistakenly believed they can mandate ideological compliance without consequence. Whether it is a mandatory institutional class in Pennsylvania or taxpayer-funded partisan displays at a Texas university, the standard remains the same: public educational institutions must serve all students equally, rather than acting as a sandbox for political activism. I will continue to hold universities like Penn State and UT Dallas accountable through aggressive legislative lobbying and rigorous investigations. The removal of the wall at UTD is a victory for the rule of law and transparency in Texas.

Student withdraws from UTD, citing pride wall's removal

A student remarks on "the final piece of evidence that UTD does not care about its students"

MAXWELL REED
Courtesy

My name is Maxwell Reed, a transgender undergraduate student at UTD. In February, I called to *The Retrograde*'s attention the quiet discontinuation of mixed gender housing among incoming students. I participated in an interview outlining how alienating this is for the university's trans students, how this puts them in harm's way. In that interview, I noted that I had been considering transferring to another university, considering the policy a spit in the face to my community.

However, in the immediate followup to that article, I had initially postponed that idea, choosing to enroll in another year. This was before March and April of 2026, where there were a reported five murders of transgender students on college campuses across the United States. While this sowed seeds of doubt in the safety of my campus, I was still almost willing to stay. The university would at least feign support, I figured, and the National Merit scholarship was incredibly difficult to give up on.

When the summer came, I started considering withdrawal much more seriously. The more and more danger my community has been put in, especially in southern states, combined with personal mental health issues, encouraged me to start looking even further into my home state's public university. I had all but decided to withdraw from UTD by the beginning of June. My decision has only been confirmed with the university's removal of the pride wall in SSA. Despite the removal of the Galerstein Gender Center, I remained faithful. Despite the removal of mixed gender housing, I remained faithful. I remained faithful that UTD would at least have the courage to look me and my community in the eye and acknowledge us, acknowledge that we are here.

But the removal of the pride wall is the final nail in the coffin, the final piece of evidence that UTD does not care about its students. In the face of hate crime after hate crime, piece of legislation after piece of legislation, the removal has one simple message: LGBTQ+ students do not belong at UTD. I am not going to ignore that message. I accept it, I recognize that I am unwelcome, and I choose to leave.

I urge the university to consider what its actions show to its student body. I urge the university to consider the ways it is betraying its student body. Whatever it chooses to do, however, I will not be there to witness it.

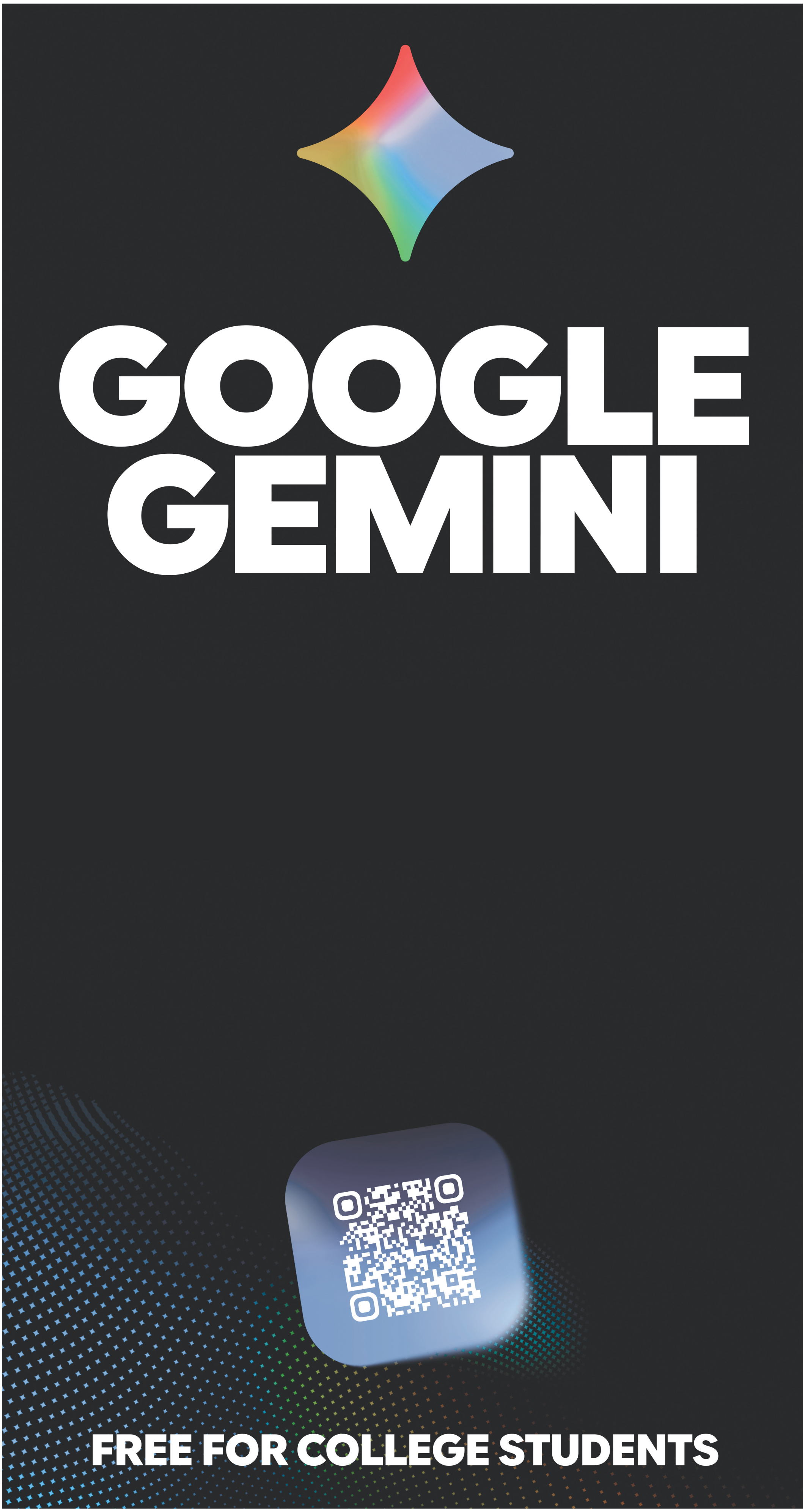
'We won't forget': student weighs in on pride wall removal

UTD is losing a queer student's trust in what was once "an environment where LGBTQ+ students were acknowledged and welcomed"

MARYAM SHEIKH
Courtesy

As a second-year student at UTD, I hold a special place in my heart for the pride wall in the SSA. Although I wouldn't figure out my own identity until much later in the year, seeing it for the first time in June 2025 acted as a sign that, despite everything, there was a place in Texas that acknowledged and welcomed everyone. When I did finally figure out I was transgender in September 2025, that acknowledgement allowed me to rest easy knowing that I had a safe place to be who I am, away from a difficult home environment.

So one can imagine my disappointment when the pride wall was removed — not even three days after Pride Month. I had hoped that, despite the current political climate, UTD would remain an environment where LGBTQ+ students like myself were acknowledged and welcomed, an environment we could trust to be safe. Unfortunately, it's becoming less and less clear each day whether that trust is well-placed.

Students shouldn't have to worry about whether they'll be safe — or whether they're even welcome — while pursuing their education. I hope the university can understand that, and consider the message it's sending. And even if it doesn't, we won't forget.

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